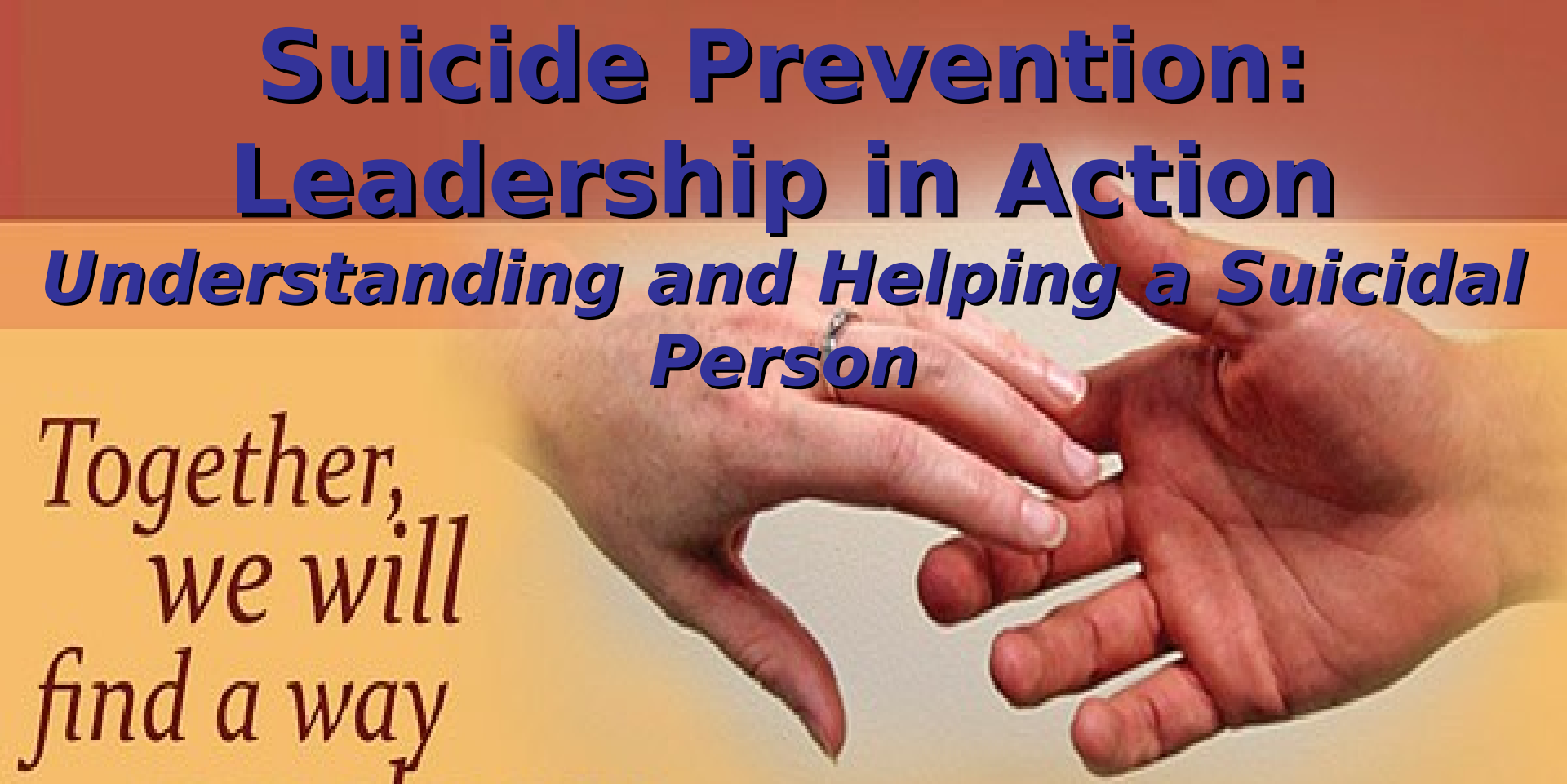
Suicide Prevention: Leadership in Action

Understanding and Helping a Suicidal Person



Summary presented by

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You are not alone,
I'm here for you.

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SUICIDE AWARENESS

SUICIDAL WARNING SIGNS

Talking about suicide	**Any talk about suicide, dying, or self-harm. Includes statements such as "I wish I had never been born," "If I see you again...," "I want out," and "I'd be better off dead."**
Seeking out lethal means	**Looking for ways to commit suicide. Seeking access to guns, pills, knives, or other objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.**
Preoccupation with death	**Unusual focus on death, dying, or violence. Writing poems or stories about death.**

SUICIDAL WARNING SIGNS

No hope for the future	**Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and being trapped ("There's no way out"). Belief that things will never get better or change.**
Self-loathing, self-hatred	**Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, shame, and self-hatred. Feeling like a burden ("Everyone would be better off without me").**
Getting affairs in order	**Making out a will. Giving away prized possessions. Making arrangements for family members.**

SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

Saying goodbye	Unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends. Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again.
Withdrawing from others	Withdrawing from friends and family. Increasing social isolation. Desire to be left alone.
Self-destructive behavior	Increased alcohol or drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sex. Taking unnecessary risks as if they have a "death wish".
Sudden sense of calm	A sudden sense of calm and happiness after being extremely depressed can mean that the person has made a decision to commit suicide.

Bottom Line for Leaders

- For the most part, suicides can be prevented, but your help is needed.
- Create a **trusting environment** where employees will feel that it is okay to ask leaders for help.

Bottom Line for Leaders
(continued)

- "Early treatment leads to faster recovery".
- Establish a climate that seeking help is not a character flaw but is seen as a sign of strength.
- Aid in **reducing the stigma** associated with mental illness

Leaders Can Reduce Stigma by:

- Not discriminating against employees who receive mental health counseling.
- Supporting confidentiality of the employee seeking mental health counseling.
- Educating all employees and family members about anxiety, stress, depression, and treatment.
- Increasing behavioral health visibility presence in employees' area.

What Leaders Can Do

- Talk to employees and listen to what they have to say.
- Send the message that you are interested in hearing about the employee's problems.
- Emphasize that seeking help in times of distress displays courage, strength, responsibility, and good judgment.

What Leaders Can Do
(continued)

- Listen, really listen!
- Take them seriously.
- Get or call for help immediately.
- Stay with the person, you are their lifeline.
- **Know your employees and your office.**

What Leaders Can Do
(continued)

To know your employees, leaders must:

- Accept the unique and diverse qualities of each employee.
- Treat each employee with the utmost respect and regard.
- Ensure employees have access to mental health.

To know your office, leaders must:

- Understand that organizational stress affects the unit's morale and in turn can

What Leaders Can Do
(continued)

Reduce office stress by the following methods:

- Encourage healthy lifestyles *(i.e., fitness, adequate rest, good nutrition).*
- Keep employees informed about all decisions that may affect them.
- Encourage participation in office planning.
- Develop a strong mentoring system within the office.
- Foster an environment of self–care and peer support *(Battle Buddy)*

Interventi on

Ask your buddy

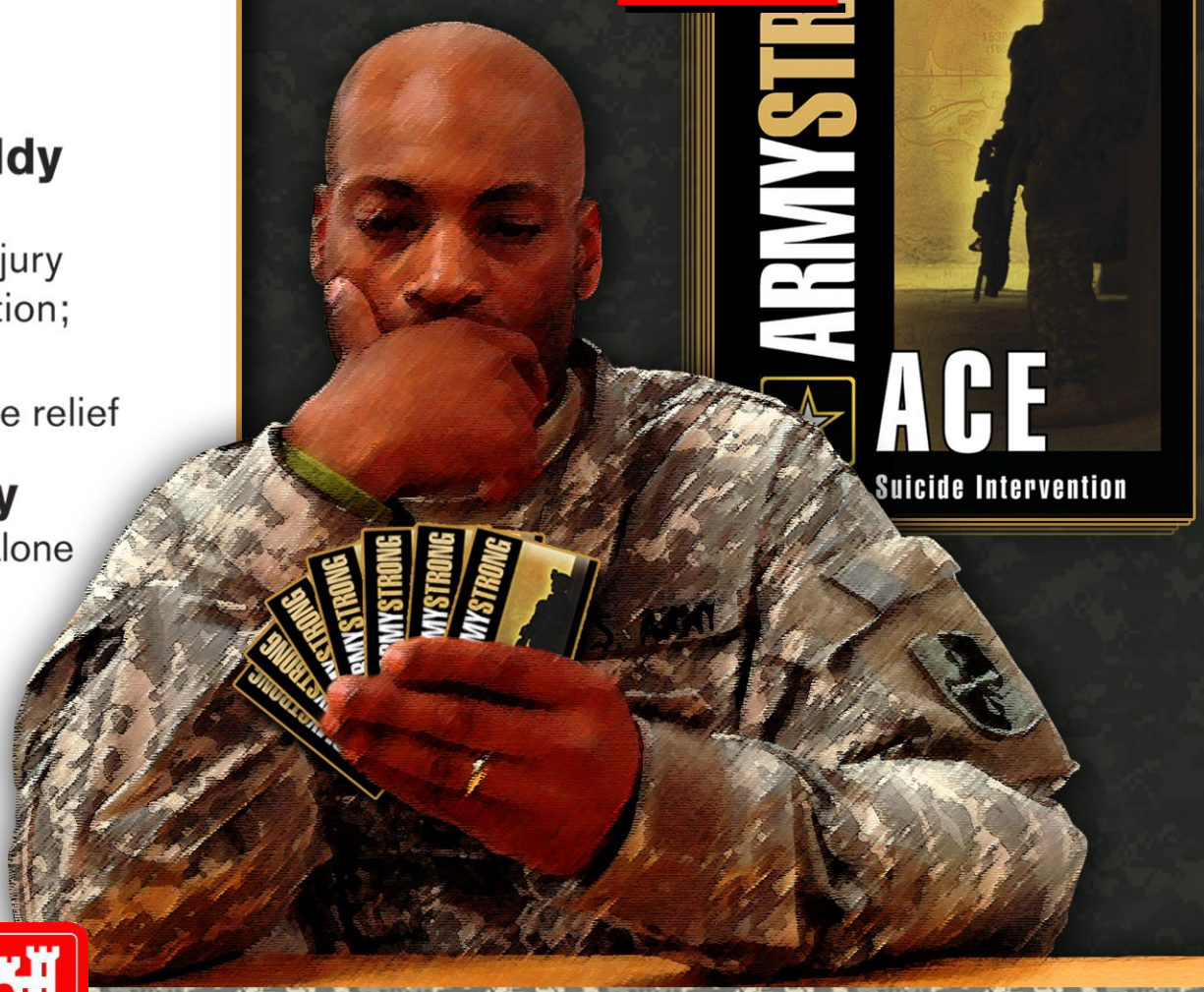
- Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm
- Ask the question directly, e.g. Are you thinking of killing yourself?

Care for your buddy

- Remove any means that could be used for self-injury
- Calmly control the situation; do not use force
- Actively listen to produce relief

Escort your buddy

- Never leave your buddy alone
- Escort to the chain of command, a Chaplain, a behavioral health professional, or a primary care provider



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SUICIDE AWARENESS

Self-Talk Against Suicide

- **Talk with someone every day, preferably face to face.** Though you feel like withdrawing, ask trusted friends and acquaintances to spend time with you.

- **Spend time with people who are <u>not</u> depressed.** This can lift you up and make you feel better.

- **If you are thinking of taking an overdose**, give your medicines to someone who can give them to you one day at a time.

- **Remove any dangerous objects or [illegible] your home**

Self-Talk Against Suicide

- **Avoid alcohol and other drugs**. They will only make you feel worse.
- **Wait until you are feeling better** before doing things you find difficult or unpleasant.
- **Make a written schedule** for yourself every day and stick to it, no matter what.
- **Don't skip meals. Get at least eight hours of sleep each night.**
- **Get out in the sun** or into nature for at least 30-minutes a day.
- **Make time for things that bring you joy.**

Be An Active Listener

- Look your employee in the eyes--undivided attention.
- Listen without judgment.
- Listen to feelings *(body language)*
- Be sincerely interested.
- Talk alone/privately.
- Allow to talk freely.
- Restate what you heard.
- Ask clarifying questions.

Be An Active Listener

(continued)

- Give plenty of time. Do not rush them.
- Be aware of your own feelings/opinions.
- Do not feel compelled to fill in the silence.
- Stay calm and objective.
- Do not criticize or argue.
- Offer hope.
- Get professional help.
- Make a plan for life: Have resources handy.

Understanding and Helping A Suicidal Person

~ Level of Risk ~

Low — Some suicidal thoughts. No suicide plan. Says he or she won't commit suicide.

Moderate — Suicidal thoughts. Vague plan that isn't very lethal. Says he or she won't commit suicide.

High — Suicidal thoughts. Specific plan that is highly lethal. Says he or she won't commit suicide. **REPORT TO HIGHER AUTHORITIES.**

Severe — Suicidal thoughts. Specific plan that is highly lethal. Says he or she will commit suicide.

EMERGENCY!!!

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Refer for Professional Help

Responsibility rests with office leadership.

Emergency:

- **Threat to life and lethality is imminent or severe.**
- **Consult with a suicide prevention support specialist.**
- **Escort immediately to the Emergency Room, Behavioral Health, Chaplain, etc.**

Refer for Professional Help

(continued)

Non-Emergency:

- Consult with a Chaplain or behavioral health care provider
- Counsel employee and refer to Employee Assistance Program.
- Escort the employee to behavioral health with command referral

Suicide Prevention Resources

- ✓ Suicide or crisis hotlines: 1-800-SUICIDE, 1-800-273-TALK
- ✓ 911
- ✓ Southeastern Center (New Hanover County): 1-866-875-1757
- ✓ Employee Assistance Program: 1-800-869-0276
- ✓ Medical Services: Emergency Room
- ✓ Marriage and Family Counselors
- ✓ Local clergy

Training Resources

http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/readiness/suicide.aspx

Suicide Prevention should be taken
seriously.
Get Involved!
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SUICIDE AWARENESS